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THE BATTLE OF NEUVE CHAPELLE

BY JOSEPH S. AUERBACH

"To see Neuve Chapelle by daylight is to see the most fearful example of the power of modern artillery fire yet witnessed. . . . Yet two objects stood practically unharmed amidst that low sky-line of ruins—effigies of Christ on the cross, of the type familiar to travelers in France. Eight-inch shells had excavated enormous holes on either side of the base of one; and, while other trees in the town had been cut in two and splintered and gashed, four small evergreen shrubs around the other effigy had been undisturbed. Many soldiers remarked the curious phenomenon. Indeed, the soldiers talked much of it."—From the Daily Journals.

THE arrows of the Lord are drunk with blood,
As sung of old; the glittering sword He
Whets for vengeance on a recreant
World which tramples down commands divine,
To crowd at altars of the envious
Gods in worship,—the brutal tribal gods
Who, long ago dethroned, would teach
Men base renouncement of the vital faith,
That radiant ensign lifted up
As guide for anxious feet of all that
Mount the higher way with firm resolve;
Those gods who would have men be consecrate
To naught but thoughts which eat away the soul's
Desire; who would that the advancing hosts
Of peace should halted stand while merciless
Legions onward rush—Death's messengers
To satiate the greed and glorify
The lust of power in kings.

But, as said the Christ, the end is not yet;
Nor dead nor even sleeping is that faith
Still trusting in the darkness for the day;
A faith whose finer promptings with a new
God-given vision will ever look beyond

The strife and rancor of embitter'd foes
For downfall sure of vaunted blasphemy,
The healing of the wounds and hurts of men
And rearing of those lofty castles fair
As domicile for all the ardent hopes
And dreams of those who live undaunted lives;
A faith supreme, sublime in reverence,
Which has for sustenance not creeds
Nor doctrines arid, but living waters
From purest founts exhaustless.

'Tis not by days or years but by the flight
Of ages only we may know aright
The measure of the mighty progress gained
Along the road where men must go through places
Waste up to the shining heights, with harvests white
And glowing, welcoming sun.
We need despond not therefore if at times,
As loiterers, men seek pleasure's haunts and
Folly's labyrinths for sumptuous idling;
Or wander to the brink of deadly peril,
Or drink the bitter dregs from out life's cup.
The gracious day of tribulation comes
With certain threshing of the false from true,
When all the glorious promises of
God to man shall be redeemed at last.
Of this, e'en dullard skeptic cannot doubt
If through the blackness he but seek the light.

At Neuve Chapelle that day Death's murderous
Guns belched everywhere consuming fires; nor
Man nor thing could hope survival from those
Cruel hours which Time blushed deep with shame
At record of on the lamenting page.
But even here against the background dread,
With naught to greet the eye but ruin vast,
There stood alone the pleading symbol of
That other Anguish infinite, and yet
More certain covenant of saving grace
Than rainbow span for earth's assurance
From after menace of destroying floods;
The crucifix with sculptured Christ to
Testify that all the odious curse

Of passion's tyranny is to end,
And vicious commerce with the grov'ling aim;
Whilst peoples ruling in the stead of lords
Shall herald the decree of sov'reign peace,
And reason of its travail shall give birth
To justice quickened, truth chivalric,
Mercy gentler always; which, nurtured ever
By the strivings and the prayers of men
And growing with the years, shall come at last
Through God's own providence full-statured
To the might of Righteousness.

JOSEPH S. AUERBACH.